

REMARKS

Applicants hereby request further consideration of the application in view of the amendments above and the comments that follow.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-12, 15 23 and 24 were pending in the application at the time of the Action. Claims 1 and 9 stand rejected under Section 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,861,359 to Ota et al.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that Claims 11-12 and 15 are allowed and that Claims 2-10 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Page 3 of the Action indicates that Claims 23-24 are allowed; however Claims 23-24 depend from Claim 1, which the Action rejects under Section 102(e). No prior art rejections have been made with respect to Claims 23-24. Therefore, for purposes of this response, it is assumed that Claims 23-24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In order to expedite prosecution, Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations of allowable Claim 24. Claim 9 depends from Claim 1 and is also in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the current claims are in condition for allowance.

Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance.

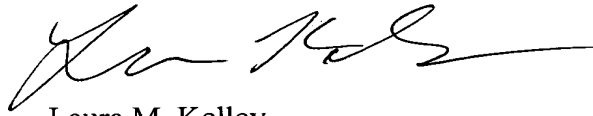
Applicants note that the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance includes language generally tracking portions of different ones of the allowed claims. Applicants understand that the Examiner has provided generalized comments but that each of the independent claims is patentable in light of the respective recitations contained in those claims.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is now in condition for allowance, which action is requested. Should the Examiner have any matters outstanding of resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

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Respectfully submitted,

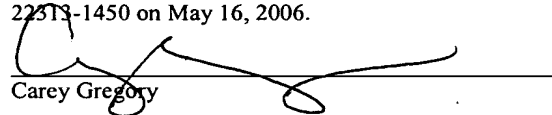


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